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**Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan**

# Report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

**Note by the Secretary-General*****

In its resolution 2002/31 of 25 July 2002, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/269 of 20 December 2002, also requested a report. The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report requested, which has been prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and is submitted in response to the two resolutions. A report on assistance to the Palestinian people, covering the period June 2002 to May 2003, is also being submitted to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council, as requested in resolution 57/147 of 16 December 2002. The annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East provides information, inter alia, on the socio-economic conditions of the registered population in the occupied Palestinian territory.[1]

* A/58/50/Rev.1 and Corr.1.
** E/2003/100.
*** As official sources were lacking for most of the information contained in the present report, a longer period for clearance was required for extensive consultations within the various United Nations entities at Headquarters and in the field. The report was therefore delayed two weeks for processing.

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# Report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia* on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

*Summary*

The occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel continues to have a serious detrimental effect on all aspects of the living conditions of the Palestinian people.

The Israeli army has continued to resort to excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, house demolitions, increasingly severe mobility restrictions and closure policies, as well as the confiscation and bulldozing of productive Palestinian agricultural land.

The Palestinian economy continues to accumulate losses, currently equal to half of its annual gross domestic product. Unemployment has increased threefold, and poverty has risen among more than two thirds of the population.

Women and children bear a special and enduring burden resulting from the occupation. Palestinian children face exposure to mounting violence, and their access to educational opportunities and health facilities have been reduced to unacceptably low levels. Educational outcomes are consistently declining, as are nutritional standards and public health conditions.

As noted in previous reports, Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory remain one of the principal issues fuelling the conflict between the two peoples. The geographic distribution of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory severely restricts the growth of the Palestinian communities.

The Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights continues to witness settlement expansion beyond the 33 settlements already in place. Social services such as schooling, higher education and medical facilities remain insufficient for the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights.

* The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia would like to acknowledge with appreciation the substantive contributions of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories to this report.

# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2002/31 of 25 July 2002, the Economic and Social Council stressed, inter alia, the importance of reviving the Middle East peace process on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) of 22 November 1967, 338 (1973) of 22 October 1973 and 425 (1978) of 19 March 1978, and the principle of land for peace as well as the compliance with the agreements reached between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people. The resolution reaffirmed the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The resolution stressed the need to preserve the territorial integrity of all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods in the territory, including the removal of restrictions on going into and from East Jerusalem, and the freedom of movement to and from the outside world. The Council reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan to all their natural and economic resources and called upon Israel not to exploit, endanger or cause loss or depletion of those resources. It also reaffirmed that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, were illegal and an obstacle to economic and social development. The Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly, through the Council, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. In its resolution 57/269 of 20 December 2002, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural and economic resources, including land and water; and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, not to exploit, cause loss or depletion of or endanger the natural resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan. In the resolution, the Assembly recognized the right of the Palestinian people to claim restitution as a result of any exploitation, loss or depletion of, or danger to, their natural resources, and expressed the hope that this issue would be dealt with in the framework of the final status negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its fifty-eighth session.

3. On 30 April 2003, the Secretary-General warmly welcomed the formal presentation of the road map for Middle East peace, declaring that it gave the Israeli and Palestinian people a real chance to end their long and painful conflict, and thus a chance for all the people of that troubled region to establish, at last, a just and comprehensive peace. The Secretary-General expressed his belief that the road map's goal of two States, a secure and prosperous Israel and an independent, viable, sovereign and democratic Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, must be the focus of all energies and efforts.

4. It has been noted that humanitarian assistance is not the answer to the crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory. The crisis is fundamentally political, as observed by the United Nations Technical Assistance Mission following its visit in October 2002 to the Occupied Palestinian Territory: the crisis will continue to worsen unless political decisions are taken to lift closures, curfews and other restrictions on the civilian population. Durable and productive security cannot be achieved by violence

or the construction of walls and barricades. It depends on trust and respect between people.[2]

# II. Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem

## Deaths and injuries

5. From the beginning of March 2002 until 7 May 2002, Israel endured an estimated 16 bombings, the large majority of which were suicide attacks. More than 100 persons were killed. On 29 March 2002 Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield. The operation included incursions into a number of Palestinian cities, including Jenin, which have resulted in numerous Palestinian civilian deaths (see A/ES-10/186). As the report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution ES-10/10 indicated, a total of 497 Palestinians were killed in the course of the Israeli army reoccupation of Palestinian area A from 1 March to 7 May 2002 and in the immediate aftermath.[3]

6. The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported 2,520 Palestinian deaths by occupation forces between 29 September 2000 and 24 September 2002. Israel reported 624 Israeli deaths from 27 September 2000 to 26 September 2002. Several thousand injuries have resulted on both sides. However, the Palestinian death rate has been at such a high level that it has directly affected the general Palestinian mortality rate, which has increased by about 2 per cent since 2001.

7. Israel continues to pursue a policy of extrajudicial killings of Palestinians suspected of involvement in armed attacks against Israelis. In 2002, there were 51 extrajudicial killings/attempts, resulting in the death of 66 suspected persons and 46 bystanders.

8. Many of the civilians killed have been children. Over 450 children have been killed in the conflict since September 2000. The Israeli army and settlers have killed 367 Palestinian children (under 18). However, Palestinian attacks on Israeli targets have killed 82 Israeli children.

9. Medical facilities and personnel administering to the wounded have been attacked. The Israeli army has killed 18 health workers and injured 370; and it has damaged 240 ambulances and destroyed 34.

## Arbitrary arrests and detentions

10. The Israeli army's house-to-house searches have affected from 30 to 50 per cent of Palestinian homes in various areas of the occupied Palestinian territory, and between 12 and 36 per cent of households have reported the arrest of at least one family member. Mass arrests were conducted, as illustrated by the Friday, 29 March 2002 raid on Al-Bireh (West Bank), where the occupation army assembled all male residents aged 15 to 45 in a school yard. They forced the majority to remain in the school throughout the day and night, releasing some the next morning, but hauling others away in buses.

11. During the two major Israel army incursions into the occupied Palestinian territory, in February and in late March 2002, the number of Palestinians arrested

was 10,000. Some have been released, but about 4,000 persons remain in detention, including 38 women prisoners (A/57/207, para. 37). Prior to the launch of Operation Defensive Shield, 60 Palestinians had been held in administrative detention. According to B'Tselem, an Israeli non-governmental organization, as of January 2003, more than 1,000 Palestinians were being held in administrative detention.[4]

12. Israeli forces have also detained local staff of the United Nations. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been refused access to and information about its detained staff members. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has also complained that its buildings have been used repeatedly as detention centres. On 9 April 2002, special Israeli forces and army units broke into the UNRWA Ramallah Men's Training Centre, arresting its dean and 104 others.

13. Children are affected by arbitrary detention, not only by being deprived of family members and their right to visit them in detention, but also as detainees and prisoners themselves. A total of 280 children have been detained. The Israeli army has confirmed that it prohibited Palestinian juvenile detainees at Ofer Camp from meeting their families and from continuing their studies.[5]

## Population displacements

14. The destruction of Palestinian homes and the military siege and curfews on residential areas have had multiple effects on the population of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem. Both those rendered homeless and those facing military threat in their place of residence have been obliged to seek refuge elsewhere. At the end of the 2002 incursions, between 23 and 37 per cent of the families housed other families as a result of life-threatening danger around the displaced family's home, demolition or confiscation of homes by the Israeli army, or being stranded and unable to reach home.

15. From late 2000 through 2002, Israeli measures have compelled some 70,000 Palestinians (1.3 per cent of the West Bank population, and 2.6 per cent in the Gaza Strip) to change their residence. Direct military activity has caused 60 per cent of the displacements. Those forced to endure long detentions and humiliation by the Israeli military at checkpoints have had to shift residences to ensure access to work or study. More than two thirds of the displaced persons expected the change to be temporary, which implies yet another displacement in the future. Statistics show a higher proportion of displaced males than females (15/20).

16. The military siege, closures and curfews also isolate residential areas for long periods. In certain areas, especially Al-Muwasi, in the southern part of the Gaza Strip, and in Al-Syafa, in northern Gaza, the siege has meant full isolation. Only local residents are allowed in and out, at the army's discretion. Construction materials are not allowed to enter, nor are medical personnel. Hundreds of families have been displaced as a result, and such population transfer appears to be the objective of military operations, extinguishing all aspects of normal life for Palestinians living near Israeli settlements.

## Property destruction

17. In November 2001, the Committee against Torture concluded that Israeli policies of closure and house demolition may, in certain circumstances, amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and called on Israel to desist from the practice (CAT/C/XVII/Concl.5, paras. (i) and (j)). The Israeli forces escalated their acts of forced eviction, seizure, demolition and closure of Palestinian structures throughout the occupied Palestinian territory in 2002 and 2003. During the period, Israeli forces demolished well over 1,275 Palestinian homes. UNRWA has reported that, between March and November 2002, the army destroyed 304 refugee homes in the West Bank, in addition to the approximately 600 refugee housing units destroyed in their assault on Jenin (April 2002).

18. Following the army incursions of spring 2002, between 31 and 87 per cent of Palestinian families in the Occupied Palestinian Territory reported considerable destruction to their neighbourhoods, and between 28 and 59 per cent reported exposure to shooting and/or destruction of their homes. In the single raid on Jenin refugee camp, the Israeli army completely destroyed some 600 homes with bombs and bulldozers, leaving an additional 200 homes unfit for habitation and 1,250 families (over 6,000 individuals) homeless, including a majority of children.

19. On 29 January 2003 in Rafah, the Israeli army shelled the Tal al-Sultan neighbourhood. The destroyed apartments had been newly built to house Palestinian families that army attacks had previously rendered homeless. The families were to take delivery of the new apartments on 1 February 2003.[6]

20. Such operations are accompanied by intensive fire, preventing the victims from salvaging their belongings. In most cases, the Israeli authorities do not warn the affected civilians in advance. Israel has escalated the destruction of Palestinian homes with explosives since early September 2002, following the policy of destroying the homes of Palestinians suspected of armed resistance.

21. During 2002, in occupied Jerusalem, Israeli authorities escalated the demolition of Palestinian houses by destroying more than 120 structures of different types. This practice has reached its highest level since 1987.[7]

22. In the Gaza Strip, a total of at least 2,424 Palestinian homes had been damaged by the end of 2002. The Israeli army has completely destroyed 704 homes, leaving 23,122 people homeless, including a majority of children. This preceded the army's destruction of 439 Palestinian homes in the north Gaza governorate in 2003, representing a sharp increase over the rate of destruction in 2001-2002.[8]

23. In addition to family homes (worth $66 million in 2002), the Israeli army has destroyed private assets in the form of buildings; equipment and inventory ($97 million); physical infrastructure ($88 million, of which $64 million were road networks); cultural heritage ($48 million); Palestinian Authority assets, including ministries and municipalities ($20 million); private and public cars ($6 million); and non-governmental organization and private social services ($56 million). Loss of institutional memory and equipment have made basic functions impossible, particularly with the Israeli army's destruction and confiscation of vital records, computers and software in the key Palestinian Authority ministries (Finance, Education and Interior). The army's destruction of water, electricity generation facilities and grids, solid waste disposal stations and road networks, and its

confiscation of equipment and machinery of private institutions alone have generated an estimated $360 million in losses in April 2002.[9]

## Mobility restrictions and closure policies

24. Between 1 October 2000 and 31 December 2002, Israeli authorities closed the main Gaza crossing at Erez checkpoint completely for 362 days, and partially for 262 days. Erez industrial zone was closed for 67 days; Karni commercial crossing was completely closed for 143 days and partially for 41 days. Sofa was closed for 275.

25. In May 2002, Israel introduced a new feature to the pass system under which Palestinian residents need special permits from the Israeli Civil Administration to travel between Palestinian localities within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The new policy formally fragmented the West Bank into eight blocks, creating 64 Palestinian distinct enclaves, maintained by 46 permanent checkpoints and 126 roadblocks.

26. The Israeli Government has initiated the construction of physical barriers running through the West Bank to separate the Israeli and Palestinian populations, initially with over 100 kilometres of high concrete walls, fences, buffer zones, trenches and security watchtowers. According to the long-term plans, two walls will extend the entire 360-kilometre length of the West Bank.[10]

27. The construction is taking place in the most fertile and dense agricultural valley areas of the western Occupied Palestinian Territory. It has already severed farmers from their plots. In the Qalqilya governorate alone, the wall will stretch along the fields of 300 farmers, and 1,000 farmers will lose significant portions of land to the western side of the wall. The loss of wells will deprive the remaining accessible land of water needed to farm it, while the close proximity of Israeli armed guards will pose a threat to farmers cultivating what fields remain. As of December 2002, documentation of wall-related destruction of agricultural land and assets had been conducted in 53 communities in Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya districts, an area containing an estimated population of 141,800. Direct damage to those communities from wall and barrier preparations and construction up to that time included the destruction of some 83,000 olive and other fruit trees, and 615 dunums of irrigated land, including greenhouses, 37 kilometres of water networks and 15 kilometres of agricultural roads. In addition, a total of 238,350 dunums of land (238.3 square kilometres) were being isolated between the Green Line and the Wall; 57 per cent of that area was cultivated land, planted mostly with olive trees and field crops.[11]

## Israeli settlements

28. The geographic distribution of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continues to severely restrict the growth of Palestinian communities and is an obstacle to their economic and social development. The settlements have been condemned as illegal under numerous resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

29. Forty-five Israeli settlements are being expanded by 11,128 dunums; four of the settlements are new, and the new outposts (care vans) number 113, spread across the West Bank.

30. Israel contends that the expansion of settlements is a function of the existing population's "natural growth". This term has never been precisely defined. Successive Israeli Governments have strongly encouraged migration from Israel to the settlements by offering generous financial benefits and incentives. The current annual increase of 11 to 12 per cent in settler numbers far exceeds the 2 per cent population growth inside Israel (E/CN.4/2003/5/Add.1).

31. A critical factor affecting Palestinian life is the lavish allotment of land resources for settlement. Planning maps remain largely inaccessible to the public. However, available data indicate that the authorities have allotted 41.9 per cent of all the West Bank to settlements as building, planning and development zones.[12] For example, in the Migilot settlement in the Judean desert, Israeli planning authorities have allotted 700,000 dunums of land to its settler population of 900 (E/CN.5/2003/5/Add.1, para. 39).

32. The Israeli Government finances some 50 per cent of settlement costs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and 25 per cent of housing inside the Green Line. Israeli illegal settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, who recorded the highest per capita income of Israelis in the 1990s, receive $520 per capita in subsidies from the budgets publicly disclosed, while, in the communities of Arab citizens of Israel, the most disadvantaged individuals receive the equivalent of $235 in public benefits.[13]

33. In its 2002 budget, the Government of Israel appropriated $154 million for infrastructure, industrial investment grants, housing, agricultural programmes and educational subsidies for the settlements. For 2003, it is devoting 1.9 billion new sheqalim (NIS) ($452 million) from its budget for the settlements.[14]

34. It is reported that there are plans to construct five new settlements in Rimal Halutza, in Gaza near the Egyptian border. The location is planned to attract around 15,000 Israelis into an area of 80,000 Palestinian dunums, with implementation anticipated in 2004.[15]

35. Settler bypass roads also impose the demolition of structures and closure of over 150 metres of Palestinian lands to each side.[16] The bypass roads link Israeli settlements to each other and to Israel proper, and this easy access allows for attractive living conditions for settlers, thus facilitating the expansion and consolidation of settlements. The network divides the occupied Palestinian territory into areas separated and surrounded by military-controlled roads, cutting the Palestinian areas into a number of isolated homelands. That network, along with other planning restrictions, prevents the development of Palestinian towns and villages, exacerbates overcrowding, prevents Palestinian territorial contiguity and further disconnects Palestinian communities from each other. The network undermines the Palestinian economy by restricting movement and impeding commerce.

36. Settler actions against Palestinians include erecting roadblocks to disrupt normal movement, shooting at roof-top water tanks, burning cars, smashing windows, destroying crops and uprooting trees, and harassing merchants. Settlers have also attacked paramedics and fire fighters. Monitors recorded at least 156 cases of such attacks during the period 1 March to 30 November 2002. Settler violence in

the past year concentrated on preventing and confiscating the autumn olive harvest in the West Bank, the main source of livelihood for most rural Palestinians.

37. The confiscation of land and properties is a dominant feature of Israeli occupation and population transfer policy. The confiscated land area has reached well over 70 per cent of the entire West Bank; and in the Gaza Strip, rougnly one third of the land. Settlements implanted near built-up Palestinian areas impose a 500-metre buffer zone, creating a planning pretext for removing Palestinian homes and buildings and confiscating a wide swath of land around the settlements, at the expense of the Palestinian owners.

38. By end February 2002, the army had destroyed 31,283 hectares of agricultural land and 485,665 trees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, leaving 5,243 farmers without a livelihood.[17]

## Water and environment

39. Palestinian entitlements to water include the aquifers of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in addition to their rightful share as riparians of the Jordan River. However, patterns of Israeli military and settler land use coincide with severe discrimination against Palestinians in access to water throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory and excessive consumption by the Israeli settlements (see E/C.12/1/Add.27, paras. 10, 24, 32 and 41).

40. Israel extracts more than 85 per cent of the Palestinian water from the West Bank aquifers, accounting for about 25 per cent of Israel's water use. Under Israeli restrictions, Palestinian water consumption per capita is 82 cubic metres as compared with 326.5 cubic metres for Israeli citizens and settlers. Figures for daily per capita water use indicate that Israelis use five times more water (350 litres) than Palestinians (70 litres). In the water-scarce Gaza Strip, Israeli settlers consume 584 litres per day, or about seven times the Palestinian per capita consumption there. Moreover, leakage from poor infrastructure is estimated to decrease the Palestinian allotment by another 24 to 36 per cent.[18] The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a 100-litre per capita minimum daily consumption.[19]

41. In a pre-dawn assault on 29 February 2003, Israeli tanks and army bulldozers invaded Rafah (Gaza Strip) and completely destroyed the town's two main water-wells. The wells had produced 50 per cent of the town's scarce water resources.[20]

42. About 150 Palestinian communities have no independent water supply. Army closures and movement restrictions have cut them off completely from any water source. Armed Israeli settlers and uniformed soldiers occasionally destroy cisterns, contaminate collection tanks and damage pumps belonging to Palestinians. Israeli soldiers have destroyed water supplies of refugee camp families by shooting holes in roof-top cisterns.[21]

43. The shortage of water has obvious effects on the region's fragile environment. At the Wadi Gaza catchment, extending from Jabal Khalil (West Bank) to the Gaza coast, a levee on the Israeli side prevents the natural flow of water from reaching Gaza, although some flooding occasionally takes place. Aerial photos show the Gaza border as demarcating a land deprived of water. The site where the Israeli army recently extirpated some 26,000 trees had been the only significant green area in the northern Gaza Strip east of Beit Hanun.[22] The Israeli occupation has also left

95 per cent of the few forested areas in the Gaza Strip denuded.[23] The remaining green areas, such as El-Mawasi on the south Gaza coast, are the sites of intense settler activity and the current subject of Israeli military siege and comprehensive curfew on 15,000 Palestinian citizens.

44. The Desk Study on the environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, conducted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), observed that biodiversity and conservation problems had been aggravated in the present conflict by various means, including the following:

- Direct degradation from military operations
- Population pressures on natural systems owing to high growth rates and the continuing refugee crisis
- Growth of Israeli settlements where land is already scarce
- Restrictions on communications, movement and access, limiting environmental management measures
- Construction of the separation fence, blocking terrestrial fauna and cutting ecological corridors
- Solid waste and wastewater pollution
- Israel's clearing of vegetation for security, settlement and other purposes
- Fragmentation of areas, enforced by interim arrangements, making coherent and integrated approaches to environmental management impossible
- Lack of trust and cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian Authority institutions concerned with the environment, impeding cooperation.[24]

45. Industrial and waste-management practices are generally inadequate to preserve environmental health, and the required investment in treatment and protection measures is beyond the current means of most Palestinian institutions, even with the modest level of international assistance to date. More stringent Israeli standards do not apply in its settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, owing to fiscal incentives and non-enforcement. Reportedly, this has caused migration of polluting Israeli industries, including asbestos, fibreglass, pesticide and flammable gas, notably in the settlements near Tulkarem (West Bank).[25] Further cooperation and field studies are needed to assess conflicting claims about contamination, such as from polychlorinated biphenals (PCBs) and radioactive waste, including possible depleted uranium munitions.[26]

46. Israeli closures and destruction of water and sanitation facilities and other infrastructure have degraded environmental health conditions, with children typically being affected disproportionately. Owing to army-imposed closures, solid waste disposal in the Gaza Strip has been particularly restricted, and this is also the case in all West Bank towns under the intermittent Israeli army curfews imposed since June 2002. Israeli army destruction of both the water network and sewage lines in Balata and Askar refugee camps (West Bank) has caused sewage to contaminate the water line, while Israeli army closures have hampered both personnel access to affected areas and material access to chlorine to administer needed remedial measures to treat the water supply. The World Health Organization

reported an outbreak of over 600 cases of shigellosis there between December 2002 and January 2003.

## Public health

47. The World Health Organization has warned that the occupied Palestinian territory health system is in danger of collapse.[27] The crisis is reflected in a shortage of medicine/antibiotics used to treat injuries encountered; the inability of health personnel and patients to gain access to health facilities; and the lack of food, water and electricity. Frequent and long utility cuts have affected medicine supplies in central stores, and maintenance and other personnel have been prevented from reaching refrigerators and other equipment when needed to save precious supplies.

48. Closures and curfews have resulted in Palestinian health facilities operating at only 30 per cent capacity. There has been a 60 per cent decline in the implementation of school health programmes and similarly dramatic interruption of immunization coverage, including that for measles, tuberculosis (BCG) and polio.[28] UNRWA reports that only 46.5 per cent of refugee children are being immunized according to schedule. In addition, the Agency has reported a reduction in the use of preventive health services and a 52 per cent decrease in women attending post-natal care. Meanwhile, Israel's curtailment of Palestinian and international health worker movements has impeded epidemiological surveillance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, making impossible the timely identification of, and response to, dreaded epidemic outbreaks.

49. On most days, 75 per cent of UNRWA health services personnel cannot reach their workplace. Consequently, 14,278 health staff workdays have been lost in the West Bank alone.[29] Despite the upgrading of 65 primary care centres, a recent survey by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) found that health workers had been unable to attend the clinics and that most centres had run out of essential medical supplies. The Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross described as absolutely unacceptable the fact that "useless humiliations take place" against Red Cross and Red Crescent staff and delegates in the field (A/57/207, para. 42).

50. Throughout the occupied Palestinian territory there are 100,000 persons with disabilities, either congenital or resulting from accidents. During the current crisis, Israeli settlers and soldiers have rendered 5,500 individuals permanently disabled through various acts of violence (Ibid., para. 61), such as incidents at the checkpoints and shootings. In the Jenin refugee camp assault, for example, three blind youths were left handcuffed in the street by the Israeli army for two and a half days. Other individuals with disabilities were also exposed to targeted army shooting (Ibid., paras. 62 and 63).

51. The Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that delays at checkpoints had resulted in 46 women delivering their babies while waiting for permission to pass through; as a result, 24 women and 27 newborn babies had died.

52. Soaring poverty has limited the local Palestinian food basket, leading to micronutritional deficiencies. Children and women are of special concern for nutritional depletion. A recent survey has shown a 15.6 per cent rate of severe

anaemia among children 6 to 59 months of age, and 6.6 per cent among non-pregnant women 15 to 49 years of age.[30]

53. The proportion of Palestinian children in the occupied Palestinian territory with wasting or acute malnutrition, one symptom of recent stress, is 9.3 per cent, four times the norm. The cases in the Gaza Strip are three times those in the West Bank (4.3 per cent versus 13.2 per cent), and the incidence is higher in non-urban areas than in urban centres (12.1 per cent as compared with 13.2 per cent).

54. Birth registers show a decline in the total number of births over the past several years, reflecting a trend begun before the *Intifada* and rooted in changing socio-economic conditions. While the birth rate was above 30 per 1,000 population per year in the mid-1990s, it dropped to less than 30 in 2001; the change is also partly attributable to delayed marriages.

55. The nature of the occupation and local conditions makes the collection of reliable data on population dynamics difficult, especially those on fertility, mortality and migration. While available mortality statistics are reported above, the birth rate has been a matter of considerable speculation.

56. Almost all children are exposed to violence, including shooting, witnessing violent death, and the destruction of their home and property, despite parental efforts to protect them from such horrors. Sleep-related dysfunctions are the most common manifestations of trauma. Distress among children especially leads to nightmares, bedwetting, insomnia and interrupted sleep patterns. Psychosomatic afflictions are common, including stress, headaches, stomach cramps, skin diseases, developmental regression, withdrawal, risk-taking behaviour, rebellion and rejection of authority, aggression and depression.

57. At the end of the 2002 incursions, a Bir Zeit University study showed 70 to 93 per cent of the interviewees reported at least one member of the family with mental health problems. Symptoms included great fear among children, manifesting in shivering, crying, appetite loss and sleeplessness.

## Education

58. Violence and mobility restrictions keep children from educational opportunities. Neither teachers nor students can reach schools, and the Israeli army has destroyed 185 schools, while, of the 275 schools in the line of fire, others have been closed or are disused. Normal levels of classroom concentration are impossible in the unstable and often violent circumstances, especially when the army or settlers kill or injure a fellow student.[31]

59. There is no available assessment of academic achievement in the current school year, since Israeli-imposed closures and curfews have rendered examinations difficult to administer. Nevertheless, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East reports that final exam scores among refugee pupils in the Occupied Palestinian Territory for main curriculum subjects fell dramatically in 2002 as compared with 2000 and 2001. The proportion of students obtaining passing grades in Arabic declined from 71 per cent in 1999 and 2000 to 38 per cent in 2001; and the proportion with passing grades in mathematics dropped from 54 per cent to 26 per cent during the same period. The UNRWA compensatory

educational programme has since resulted in some recovery, but student achievement is still below the pre-2000 rates.

60. UNRWA schools reported the loss of 75,571 teacher days in 2001/2002, which is a 14-fold increase over the previous academic year. The consequent material cost to UNRWA regular school operations in 2001/2002 was $1,959,417, and an additional cost of $111,340 was incurred by the Agency's technical and vocational training programme.

61. With many schools closed, recreational and social activities are insufficient to meet children's needs. Moreover, many parents keep children indoors for their safety, although that does not prevent them from observing the conflict and suffering the moral and material losses.

62. With school systems failing to function, young people — the majority of Palestinians — have few productive outlets for their energies. Many children have sought odd jobs and dropped out of school to support the family, including selling gum and candy, washing car windows and selling newspapers. They run a high risk of long-term mental instability, physical insecurity, domestic violence and self-destructive behaviour. In East Jerusalem, this manifests itself in increased drug use and sales, reportedly with full knowledge of the Israeli police.[32] With 66 per cent of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem living below the poverty line, the common correlation between indigence and drug abuse makes this aspect of life another indicator of Arab Jerusalem as the concentrated microcosm of the negative effects of occupation.

## Economic situation

63. Owing to closures and the consequent loss of employment, Palestinian per capita gross national product declined by 12 per cent in 2000, 19 per cent in 2001 and 24 per cent in 2002. The sharp decline in Palestinian workers employed in Israel led to income losses of $757 million from October 2000 to end April 2002, or about 20 per cent of gross national income (GNI).

64. The decline in GNI has been considerable, dropping 23.2 in 2001 and 26.4, in 2002.[33] Estimates show that the crisis has already cost the Palestinian economy $5.4 billion in GNI, equivalent to the entire 1999 GNI, and over 50 per cent of 1999 gross domestic product. This is compounded by some $728 million in physical damage, including $150 million damage to donor-funded infrastructure.[34]

65. Poverty has risen substantially: 66.5 per cent of households are living below the poverty line, with a disproportionate number (84.6 per cent) in Gaza. Poverty levels have long-term consequences for public finance, trade balance, the savings-investment gap and social services. The Palestinian Authority has been forced into heavier dependence upon donor support for basic functions, diverting attention from long-term development goals.

66. Remittances from abroad have only partially offset the losses at the family and national levels. A total of 56.5 per cent of Palestinian households have lost more than half their income; more than 25 per cent (33 per cent in Gaza; 22 per cent in the West Bank) reported a loss of over 75 per cent; and 58.3 per cent have received humanitarian assistance, mostly in food aid. The dependency ratio has burgeoned to

more than 50 per cent. Whereas each bread winner was supporting an average of 5.1 persons in September 2000, she/he had to support 8.1 persons as of September 2002.

67. In comparison with the 128,000 workers from the occupied Palestinian territory employed in Israel in 2001, today 32,000 have been issued permits, of which only half can be used. In the meantime, foreign workers have filled the positions of many Palestinians formerly working in Israel, foreclosing the prospects of a return to former levels.

68. Recovery efforts seem remote. Most forms of aid seek to provide minimum welfare through humanitarian assistance. An unlikely doubling of donor support to a level of $2 billion could reduce the poverty rate only by 10 per cent,[35] and that only temporarily.

69. Production losses (manufacturing, construction, commerce, public and private services) have drastically increased where internal trade is nearly halted, reflecting a 75 per cent contraction in domestic output, for example, in April 2002. Palestinian enterprises have scaled down production activities, laying off employees; others have shut down completely. Diminished access to finance capital and building materials, and reductions in savings have forced a rapid decline in residential construction. Closures and destruction of crops have devastated the agricultural sector. Prior to 2002, the Israeli army had already destroyed 17 per cent of Palestinian productive agricultural crops, leading to a drop in production.[36]

70. Some 44 per cent of Palestinian households have had to reduce the quantity of their food, while 66 per cent have reduced the quality of food. Most (75 per cent) reported the reduction of monthly expenditures on meat of all kinds and on fruits, and 58 per cent have reduced their consumption of milk and milk products.[37]

71. Until recently, Israel had withheld Palestinian Authority revenues collected by agreement under the clearance system, including customs duties and excise taxes. By end February 2002, the loss amounted to $507 million. That, plus the declining ability to collect tax revenues, contributed to mounting Palestinian Authority budget deficits, leading to salary reductions and delayed liability payments,[38] borrowing on the commercial market and generally reducing expenditures on services. Through 2002, donors had contributed $40 million per month, or about half of Palestinian Authority spending, totalling $1.1 billion by the end of the year.[39] The Palestinian Authority public debt rose sharply to $1.2 billion by mid-2002.[40]

72. The informal economy, especially in West Bank villages, has expanded as impoverished households have resorted to desperate subsistence strategies. By 2002, the protracted conflict had exhausted most coping strategies, rendering families increasingly more dependent upon humanitarian assistance, including direct food aid and financial assistance.[41]

73. More Palestinian men than women have directly undergone the physical violence of Israel's military occupation, such as killing, injury, imprisonment and torture. In addition, as a result of the closures, detention and outright humiliation of commuting to jobs through Israeli checkpoints, the overall economic depression and resulting poverty have combined to prevent Palestinian men from performing their traditional role as breadwinners. Meanwhile, women's domestic roles and responsibilities have expanded, while their socio-economic roles and position have deteriorated. Among the consequences are the high levels of anxiety and despair that translate into domestic and apparently gender-based violence.

74. The socio-economic burden on Palestinian women has increased with their assumption of the role of head of household in the absence of the husband. In acute poverty, women have adopted coping strategies to maintain the domestic economy, such as planting, bartering or selling foodstuffs.

## III. Occupied Syrian Golan

75. Israel has occupied the Golan Heights in the Syrian Arab Republic since 1967.

76. Under such a prolonged occupation, the consequences have been extensive, affecting all aspects of life for families, villages and communities. There has been no change in Israeli policy regarding the occupied Golan. The number of settlers has increased, with the 37 existing settlements expanded during the period under review.[42] Relations between the settlers and the Arab population remain tense, particularly where settlements are located close to Syrian villages.

77. The occupation of the Syrian Golan has perpetuated the separation of families who live on either side of the valley constituting the demarcation line. Syrian students returning to their families in the Syrian Golan Heights reportedly face severe interrogations and confiscation of their belongings. Others are reportedly held in arbitrary detention for many days, facing torture and humiliation.

78. School facilities are inadequate to cover the needs of all Syrian children of school age: among a population of 25,000 located in five villages, only 5,500 boys and girls are in overcrowded classrooms. A rapid school drop-out rate is putting the children in the labour market in Israel, where they receive a lower salary than others doing the same job. There is a shortage of health centres, hospitals or clinics, maternal care, and laboratories for basic analysis and emergency services.

79. The economic consequences of the occupation for the local population include a lack of equal employment opportunities, heavy taxes, fixed low prices imposed on the main agricultural products (for example, apples), arbitrary arrest and detention, and inadequate health care. Israeli authorities have depleted the Golan environment by uprooting trees, burning forests and allowing dumping of untreated chemical waste from factories in the Israeli settlements.

80. Settlers compete with Syrians in economic activities, especially in agriculture, the principal activity of the Arab population. This is compounded by the Arab population's restricted access to water as compared with the settlers.

*Notes*

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 13* (A/58/13).

[2] United Nations Technical Assessment Mission, *Humanitarian Plan of Action 2003 for the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (New York and Geneva, 2002).

[3] A/ES-10/186. Area A designates the vicinity where the Palestinian Authority has complete authority over civilian security.

[4] B'Tselem; available from http://www.btselem.org/english/statistics/imprisoned.asp.

[5] In response to a letter sent by the Public Committee against Torture in Israel (PCATI), 26 November 2002; available from http://www.stoptorture.org.il/eng/press.asp?menu=7&submenu=1&item=94.

[6] Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, "Families have their homes destroyed for the second time; the IDF target water resources in Rafah" (press release 8/2003, 30 January 2003), available from http://www.mezan.org/main.htm.

[7] Land Research Center (Jerusalem); see http://www.lrcj.org.

[8] Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights; see http://www.mezan.org/main.htm.

[9] E/CN.4/2202/184, para. 15; A/57/207, paras. 32 and 69; and World Bank, *Fifteen Months — Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C., 2002), chap. 3.

[10] See Mission to the Humanitarian and Emergency Policy Group of the Local Aid Coordination Committee, *The Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities* (2003).

[11] Ibid.

[12] Yehezkel Lein, "Land grab: Israel's Settlement Policy on the West Bank" (B'Tselem, 2000). This is in addition to some 30 per cent of West Bank land that the Israeli army have confiscated and closed for other purposes.

[13] Shlomo Swirski, Etty Konor-Attias and Alon Etkin, *Government Funding of the Israeli Settlements in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights in the 1990s of Local Governments, Home Construction, and Road Building* (Tel Aviv, Adva Center, 2002). Values based on exchange rate of NIS 4.45 per United States dollar.

[14] See Dror Zaban, *Israeli Government Expenditures for Settlements, 2001-2002* (Jerusalem, Peace Now, January 2003).

[15] "Plan for five new colonies in Rimal Haloutza near the Egyptian border", *Monitoring Israeli Colonizing Activities in the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza* (Applied Research Institute Jerusalem, 14 January 2003), available from arij.org/paleye/index.htm.

[16] According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (Gaza), for each 100 km road, some 10,000 dunums (2,500 acres) of land are confiscated. Available from http://www.pchrgaza.org/. Path: Statistics/Settlements.

[17] Ministry of Agriculture, "Report on Palestinian agriculture losses due to recent Israeli action: September 2000-February 2002" (Ramallah, Palestinian Authority, 2002).

[18] B'Tselem, "Thirsty for a solution: the water shortage in the occupied territories and its resolution in the final status agreement", position paper (Jerusalem, 2000).

[19] United States Agency for International Development, "Report of the West Bank and Gaza mission", (Washington, 1999); and World Health Organization, *Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality* (Geneva, 1998), available from http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/dwq/guidelines/en.

[20] Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, op. cit.

[21] See B'Tselem, "Not even a drop: the water crisis in Palestinian villages without a water network" (Jerusalem, B'Tselem, 2001).

[22] The World Bank had counted 23,000 by early November 2001. See *Fifteen Months — Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment* (2002). See also Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ).

[23] The 42,000 dunums in 1971 had already been reduced to 2,000 by 1999. See http://www.arij.org.

[24] Based on findings of the *Desk Study on the Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Nairobi, United Nations Environment Programme, 2002), available from http://www.unep.org/Documents. Path: press releases, July 2002.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

[27] World Health Organization, *West Bank/Gaza Strip Health Update* (4 April 2002).

[28] Ibid.

[29] Palestinian Ministry of Health.

[30] The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), al-Quds University and Johns Hopkins University have shown an increase in malnourishment and anaemic children. The Bureau survey showed 9.2 per cent moderate to severe malnutrition among children 6 to 59 months old. In the same survey, non-childbearing women from 15 to 49 showed moderate to acute malnutrition at 5.5 per cent. The USAID survey showed those instances at 13.2 and 9.3 per cent respectively.

[31] See Conal Urquhart, "Playground bombing injures 20 Palestinians", *The Guardian* (UK), 10 April 2003. Jewish extremists from the shadowy "Revenge of the Infants" group claimed responsibility for exploding a bomb in a West Bank school playground on 9 April 2003 at the village of Jaba'a, south of Jenin, wounding 20 children.

[32] Amira Hass, "Under the noses of the Israeli police", *Ha'aretz*, 4 February 2003.

[33] World Bank, *Two Years of Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C., 2003)

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), "People under siege: Palestinian economic losses, September 2000-September 2001" (Ramallah, 2002).

[37] According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

[38] $527 million in arrears at June 2002.

[39] World Bank, *Two Years of Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment* (Washington, D.C., 2003). The Arab League contributed $840 million, and the European Union $230 million.

[40] *MAS Economic Monitor*, No. 6, April 2000; "Interview with Palestinian Authority Finance Minister Salam Fayyad", *Al-Ayyam* (Ramallah daily), 6 July 2002.

[41] United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, "Paying the price: coping with closure in Jericho, Gaza City and in two Palestinian villages" (Gaza, January 2002).

[42] Some 77 per cent of the residents are European/North American by birth. Available from http://www.fmep.org/images/charts/chart0007_1.jpg.